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American Books

Just Tom



"I am a Policeman!"

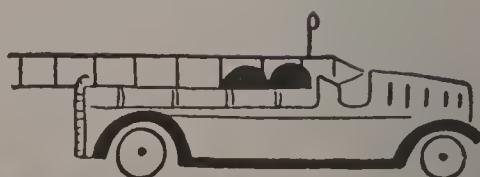


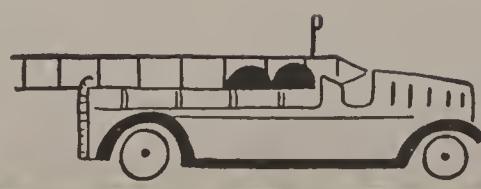
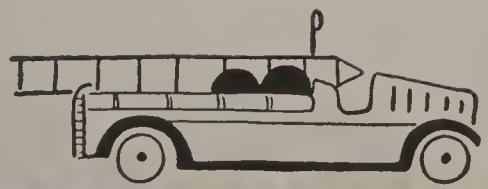
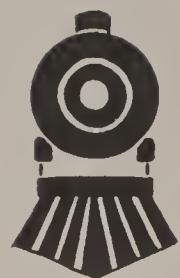
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JUST TOM



Little American Books

Just Tom

by *Arilda*
Bertha M. Rhodes



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Little American Books

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FLAG TO THE FRONT

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JUST TOM

TOM threw himself upon the ground with a sigh of relief. He had reached the place where city ends and country begins. Behind him was a narrow street to which the houses snuggled up closely, as though wishing to miss nothing of what took place before them. In front of him lay green fields, stretching away to distant hills. Among the fields stood a white house with low spreading roof, which seemed to say:

“There is plenty of room out here, why crowd up in the city?”

JUST TOM

Tom accepted this as an invitation, pillowed his head on the cool grass, and fell asleep.

How long Tom had been asleep he did not know. He was suddenly awakened by a kiss on the forehead. He could not remember ever having been kissed. He had seen Hannah kiss the baby. Now Hannah and the baby had gone to their new home in the west. The lady who had left Tom with them had never returned, so Hannah had asked the police to come and take care of him. Tom did not want to go with a policeman. He slipped out of the back door as the policeman came in at the front. By the time they had searched the house for him he was far away.

But who had kissed him? Tom opened his



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eyes. Beside him stood a beautiful black horse with a white face and eyes which looked at him kindly. The horse nodded at Tom.

“How do you do?” said Tom, not knowing what else to say.

The horse held up one of his front feet. Tom took the foot and shook it. Again the horse nodded, started off, stopped and nodded again. It was very plain that he wanted Tom to go with him. Perhaps he had come to give him a ride.

Tom was too small to climb up on his back, so he led the horse to a nearby fence. The horse waited quietly until Tom climbed the fence and was seated on his back. Then he started off on a gentle trot along the road, turned in at the gate and stopped

JUST TOM

before the white house with the low spreading roof.

“Oh, Daddy!” exclaimed a woman’s voice. “Jimmy is bringing a child, where do you suppose he got him?”

“I don’t know, Mother,” said Daddy. “I’ll see.” When the horse stopped at the door Mother and Daddy Anson were both outside waiting for him.

“Did you find a boy, Jimmy?” asked Daddy, as he helped Tom down from the horse’s back.

“Yes,” nodded the horse.

“Is he your friend?”

“Yes,” nodding.

“Do you know him, Jimmy?”

“No.” The horse shook his head.

JUST TOM

“He doesn’t know you,” said Daddy, turning to the boy. “Tell him your name.”

“My name is Tom.”

“Tom what? He wants to know all of it.”

“That’s all,” said the boy, “just Tom.”

“Is Tom your friend, Jimmy?” asked the man.

The horse nodded.

“Do you like him?”

“Yes,” nodding again.

“Would you like him better if he would give you a piece of candy?”

“Yes!” nodding very hard.

“Jimmy wants a piece of candy,” said Daddy. “Why don’t you give him a piece?”

“I haven’t any candy,” said Tom.

“Here’s a piece—but perhaps you would rather eat it yourself.”

JUST TOM

“Oh, no!” said Tom. He held out the candy and the horse took it daintily from his hand.

“Say ‘thank you,’ Jimmy,” said his master.

Jimmy nodded.

“Now kiss the boy and say good night.”

Jimmy touched Tom’s forehead with his nose; then nodding to each of them, turned and went to the stable. Tom stood looking after him. He had half a notion to follow.

“Come into the house, Tom,” said the man. “We’ve had our dinner but Mother will give you something to eat. I think you want more than a piece of candy. How about bread and milk and cookies, Mother?”

Tom was hungry. Never had bread and milk tasted better to a small boy than did

JUST TOM

that which Mother Anson set before him. He had scrubbed his face and hands and plastered his hair back with plenty of soap and warm water. There he sat shining and smiling.

“You did well, Tom,” said Mother, as she brought in a plate of cookies. Such cookies! They had scalloped edges and were all sprinkled over with sugar, and a raisin in the center of each one. They fairly melted in Tom’s mouth.

“These are good cookies, aren’t they?” asked Daddy.

“Yes, sir,” said Tom.

“Who makes the cookies in your house?” asked Daddy.

“Hannah makes them.”

“Who eats them?”

JUST TOM

“Hannah and I. The baby isn’t old enough to have cookies.”

“Perhaps Hannah has some cookies for you now?”

“No, Hannah and the baby are gone. She couldn’t take me because I didn’t belong to them,” said Tom.

“And so she asked a policeman to call for you? And you ran away from him?”

Tom looked at Daddy in amazement. How did he know?

“And Jimmy found you,” continued Daddy. “Well, don’t worry. Now you belong to Jimmy and he’ll not send for a policeman. Perhaps he’ll find a home for you. He knows a great deal for a horse.”

It was late when Tom awoke the next morning. On the chair beside his bed lay

JUST TOM

fresh clothes in place of the ones he had taken off. Tom put them on and went slowly down the stairs. No one was in the kitchen so he went out to the stable. It was empty. Jimmy was gone.

“Good morning, Tom,” called Mother Anson from the garden. “Daddy and Jimmy have gone to the city. They will be back to-night. You are to stay with me till they return.”

The day passed quickly. There were many pleasant things to do. Tom helped Mother Anson gather eggs, feed pigeons and chickens, arrange flowers for table and porch and gather apples in the orchard for apple sauce. After lunch he played under an apple tree while a saucy little squirrel scolded away at him.



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Every once in a while an apple let go of a branch and fell down with a thud. Tom gathered them up into a pile. Mother Anson had told him he might have all he could gather. At last he heard the sound of horses hoofs. Jimmy was coming. Tom ran down to the gate. Sure enough, there was Jimmy—but with a policeman on his back!

“Stop! stop!” cried Tom. “You can’t have Jimmy!” Then he looked. It was Daddy Anson dressed in a police officer’s clothes.

“Jimmy has come for more candy,” said Daddy. “He wants to know how his boy got along to-day.”

* * * *

After dinner Daddy Anson explained things to Tom.

“You see, Tom,” he said, “the policeman

JUST TOM

wants to help little children. That is a part of his work. The city pays him for doing it. Sometimes the children are so afraid that they run away, and the policeman cannot help them. Just yesterday I went to help a little boy and when I reached there he was gone.”

“What was the little boy’s name?” asked Tom.

“His name was Tom—just Tom!”

“But I thought—” said Tom, and then he stopped. The things which were true were so much pleasanter than the things which he had feared, that he couldn’t express himself. Tears came into his eyes, and then his face broke into a smile, which reminded Daddy Anson of the sun shining through the rain.

JUST TOM

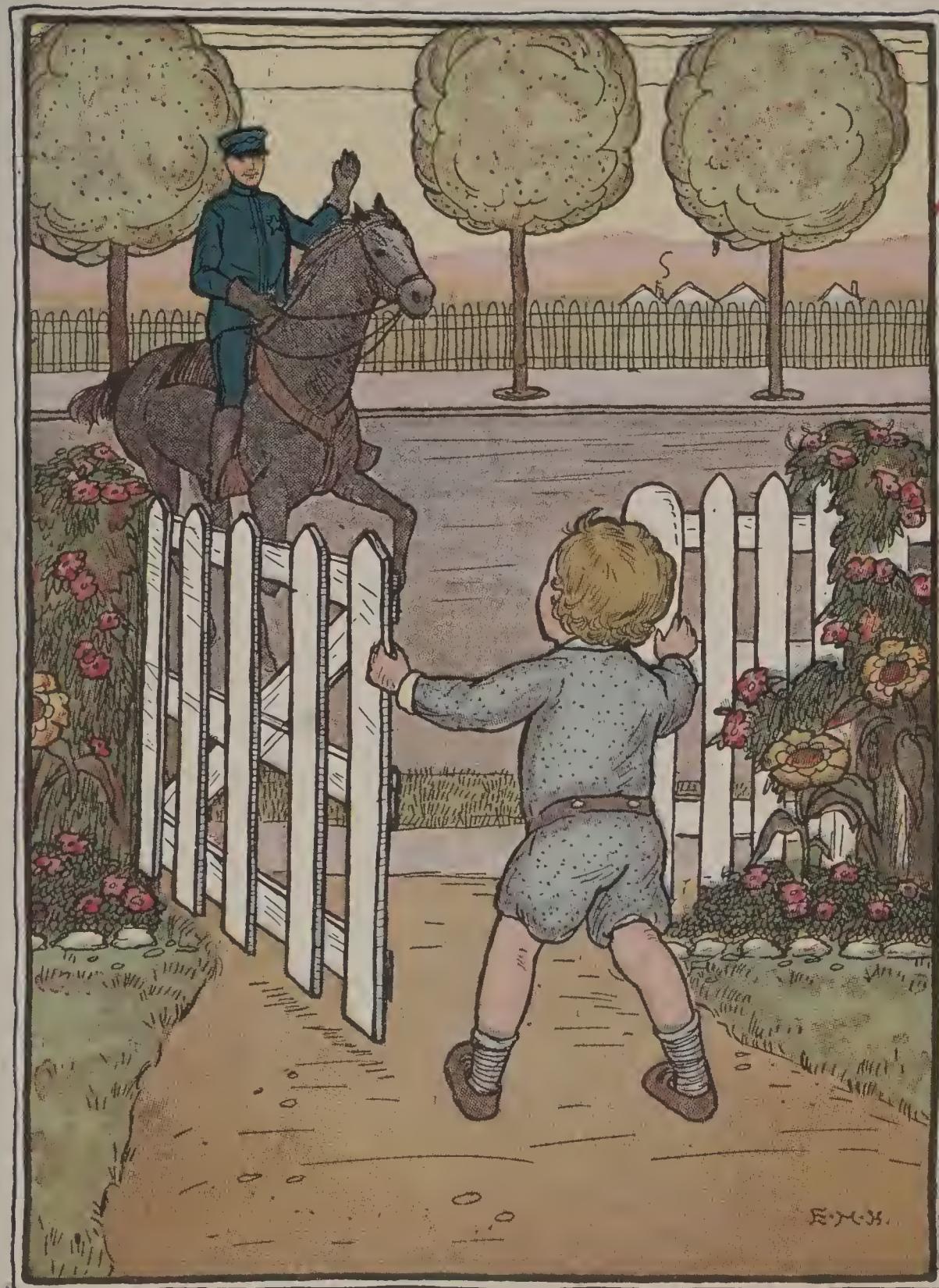
“Such a little boy,” he said, “to belong to—” he was going to say no one, but Tom finished for him.

“To Jimmy.”

“To belong to Jimmy,” said Daddy. “To-morrow I will take you with me and you shall see how Jimmy and I care for the children.”

Tom was up early the next morning. He rode in front of Daddy Anson on Jimmy’s back. How the horse’s hoofs clattered along the pavement! Soon the houses grew larger and then changed to large apartment buildings. At last Jimmy stopped.

“This is where we wait for the children,” said Daddy, as he helped Tom down from the horse. “Here comes one of the teachers. Good morning, Madame!”



JUST TOM

“Good morning, Officer! Good morning Jimmy! Will you take me across the street to-day?” Jimmy nodded, walked beside her across the street and returned. Two little girls and a boy came along.

“Good morning, George, Rosie and Mamie!” said Daddy.

“Good morning, Officer Anson, and Jimmy,” said the children.

Officer Anson and Jimmy took them safely across the street. Next came Tiny. She was a very little girl with black eyes, red cheeks and curly hair.

“Good morning, Tiny.”

“Good morning, Officer Anson. Good morning, Jimmy.”

Jimmy put his nose down to her pocket. Tiny stopped and laughed.

JUST TOM

“I didn’t forget,” she said. “See there?” and she took from her pocket a lump of sugar.

“How did he know she had sugar?” asked Tom.

“He always knows,” said Daddy. “He can smell it every time.”

When the children were all in school, Daddy Anson, Tom and Jimmy went down to the beach.

“Would you like to go into the water?” asked Daddy. Jimmy nodded. Daddy took off bridle and saddle and Jimmy waded into the water. Farther and farther he went until the water was nearly over his back. Then he turned and came back. Next he rolled over in the sand; then trotted around the beach to dry his shining coat, stopping

JUST TOM

now and then to nod good morning to the children playing in the sand. Then he came back for his bridle and saddle.

“Does he go into the water every day?” asked Tom.

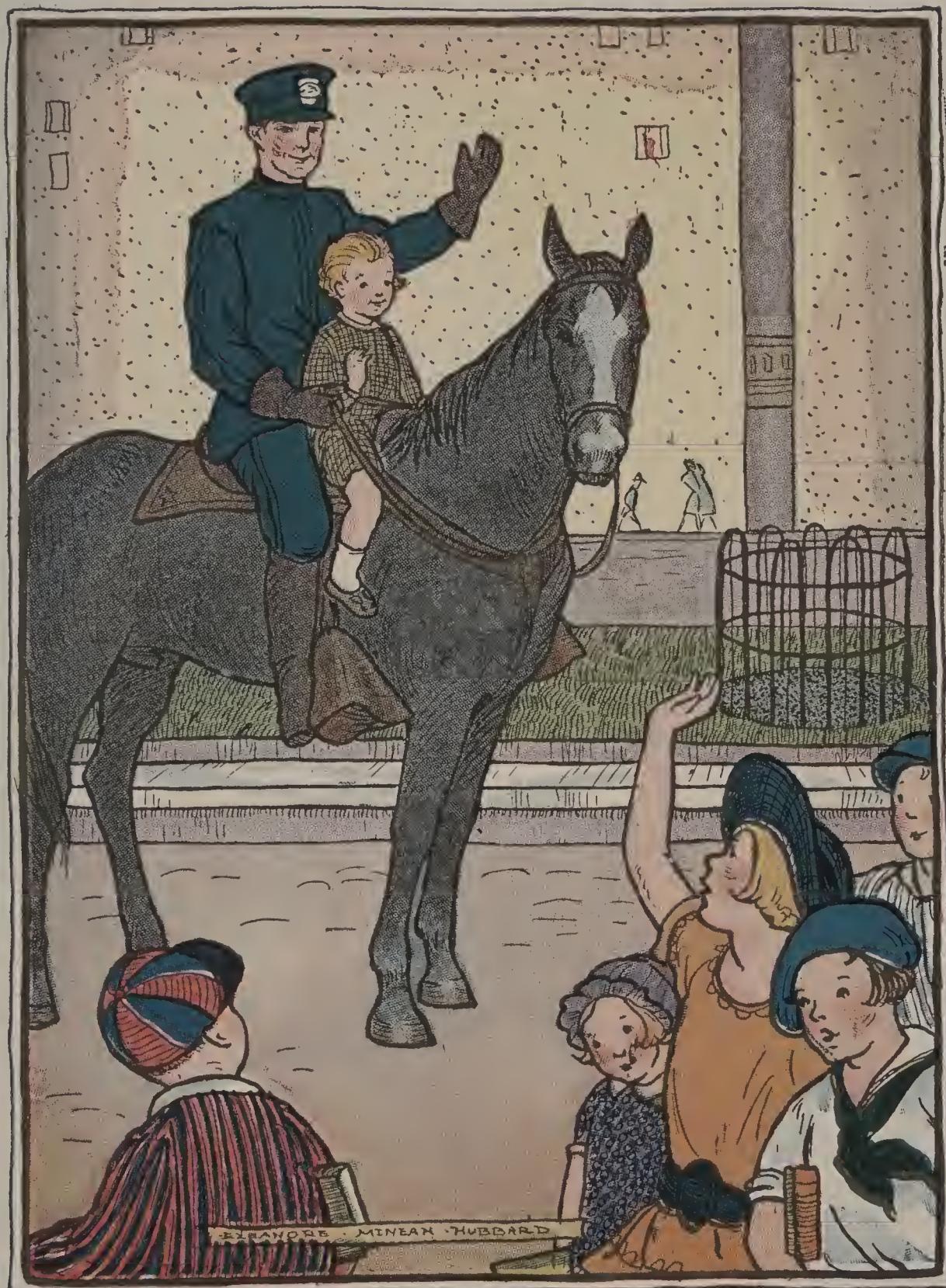
“No,” said Daddy. “He always knows when he wants to go in and can tell you. He never goes after having said ‘No.’”

They walked over to a side street. There they found two tiny children out in the middle of the road, just where an auto, flying around the corner, would strike them.

“If only children wouldn’t play in the road,” said Daddy.

He looked up and down the street. There was no one near. He waited a few minutes.

“It looks as though we would have to take them to the station. It is a mile and a half,



JUST TOM

Jimmy. You will have to follow. Tom may as well ride."

He swung Tom up on the horse's back. Then putting the baby, who was just learning to toddle, into the doll cab, and taking the little girl in his arm, he led the way to the station. The little girl was not at all afraid. She put her arms around his neck and clung to him. At the station he gave the children into the policewoman's care. This message was sent to all the other stations:

"Two little children and a doll cab found on Elaine Place, near the beach. They are at Hudson Station."

"Now," said Daddy, "when some one misses them they will call up the police and find out where they are."



JUST TOM

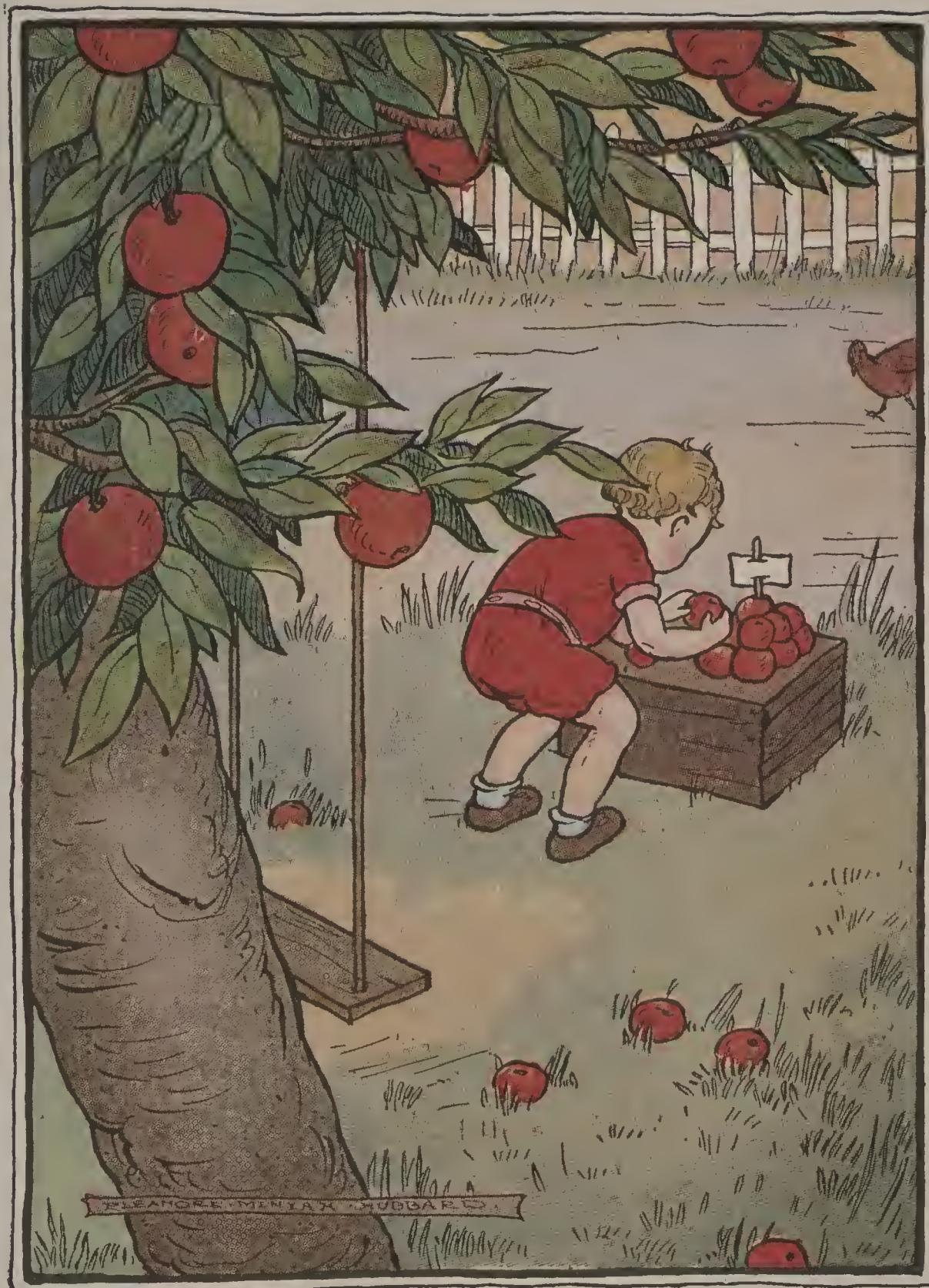
Jimmy was getting tired. He knew it was time to go home. Daddy took out his watch and held it before the horse.

“Is it time to go home, Jimmy?” he asked. Jimmy nodded.

“It is, and we’ll go; but to-day, Jimmy, you are going back to the barn.”

Jimmy turned and led the way to a large building not far distant. Daddy and Tom followed. Inside were many horses.

“You see,” said Daddy, “these horses belong to the city. They help policemen take care of the people. I’ve ridden Jimmy for fourteen years. Sometimes I take him home to see Mother Anson and have a taste of green grass. I couldn’t work without Jimmy.” Jimmy seemed to understand what he was saying. He rubbed his nose against



JUST TOM

Daddy's shoulder and nuzzled his face.

"Isn't he sweet?" said Daddy Anson.
"Isn't he the cutest thing?"

* * * *

Three weeks passed. Still no one had called for Tom and he hadn't found a home. He had saved a large basket of apples. They were out by the road where he intended to sell them to passers by. He was just putting on his cap to go out one morning when Daddy Anson came into the house. His cheeks were red. His voice was excited as he talked to Mother in the next room. When he had gone Tom learned what had happened. A number of police horses were to be sold, Jimmy among them.

"It will just kill Daddy to have him go," said Mother.

JUST TOM

“Then why does Daddy let him go?” asked Tom.

“The Mayor has ordered him sold,” said Mother. “They have bought a younger horse to take his place.”

Mother went to a house down the street to tell a friend.

Tom sat out by the road with his apples. Suddenly all the happiness had faded out of the day. Jimmy was going to be sold, and it would just kill Daddy Anson. Mother said so. If Jimmy had to be sold, why couldn’t he, Tom, buy him? He hadn’t any money. If only some one would come and buy his apples. An auto stopped in front of him.

“Apples to sell?” asked the woman who was driving.

JUST TOM

“Yes,” said Tom.

“How much are they?”

“A dollar,” said Tom. Surely a dollar would buy a horse.

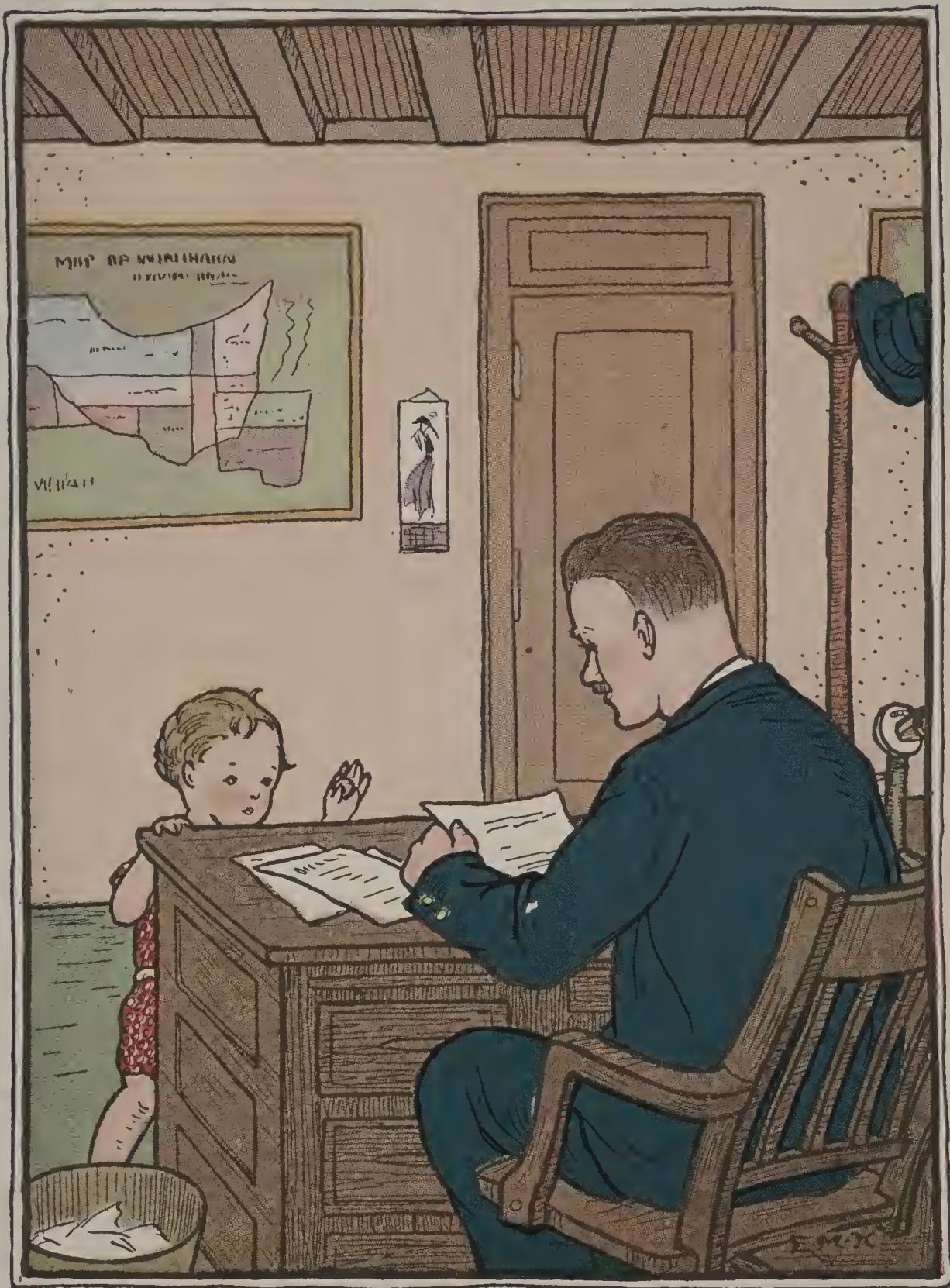
“They are good apples,” said the lady, tasting one. “I will take them.” She slipped a big round dollar into Tom’s hand. Tom helped carry the apples to the auto. The back seat was empty.

“May I ride?” asked Tom.

“Where are you going?” asked the woman.

“I am going to buy a horse,” said Tom.
“Will a dollar buy a horse?”

“Yes, if it isn’t too large a one. All right! Jump in—that is if you know where you are going!” The woman went on talking to her friend and forgot all about Tom. They



JUST TOM

were down town when she suddenly remembered and stopped.

“My boy,” she said, “I’ve brought you way into town. Now what shall I do?”

“Leave me at the Mayor’s,” said Tom. “Daddy will take me home.”

“He seems to know what he wants,” she said. “I think it’s all right. The City Hall is right here. You’ll find your father inside.”

The Mayor was sitting in his office when the door opened and Tom walked in.

“What can I do for you, little man?” he asked.

“I’ve come to buy Jimmy,” said Tom.

“Who is Jimmy?” asked the Mayor.

“Jimmy is Daddy Anson’s horse,” said Tom, “the one he rides. It will kill Daddy

JUST TOM

if any one else buys him. Mother Anson said so."

"Who is Daddy Anson?"

"Daddy Anson is the policeman who helps little children," said Tom. "Here is a dollar."

"Is that for the horse?" asked the Mayor.

"Yes, sir," Tom answered.

The Mayor took a sheet of paper and wrote upon it.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"My name is Tom."

"Tom what?"

"Just Tom." Just Tom, wrote the Mayor, and then signed his own name below it.

"Now Tom, you sit over there and look out of the window for awhile. You will see lots of interesting things."

JUST TOM

Then the Mayor turned to the telephone.

“Hello! Send Officer Anson to me.”

Soon Daddy Anson came in at the door.

“Good afternoon, Officer,” said the Mayor.

“I hear you would like to buy the horse you have been riding.”

“Yes, if I can,” said Daddy.

“He is yours,” said the Mayor, handing him the note he had written. Daddy Anson read it. It said:

“Police horse Jimmy is sold to Officer Anson, the first payment of one dollar being made by ‘Just Tom.’ ”

Signed.....

The Mayor.

“Tom!” said Officer Anson in surprise.
“Has Tom been here?”

“I’m here, Daddy,” said Tom, running up

JUST TOM

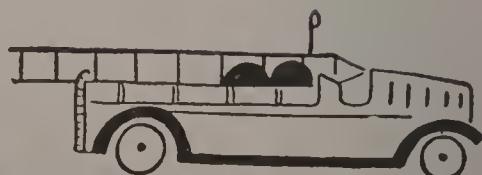
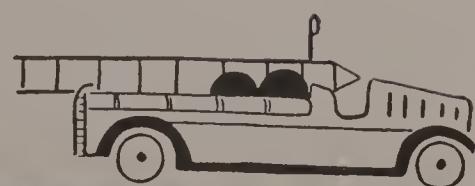
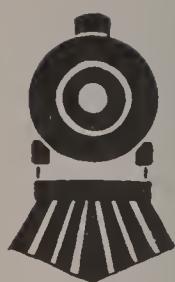
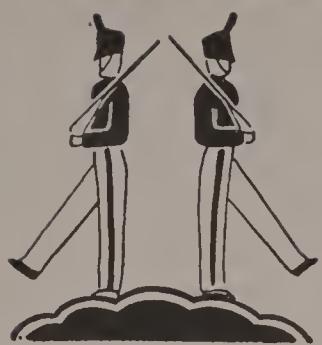
to him. "That's for Jimmy. He's yours. I bought him with my dollar!"

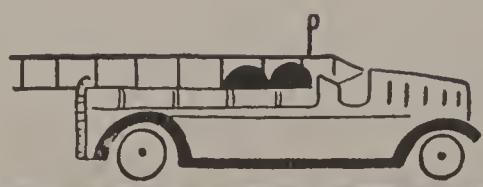
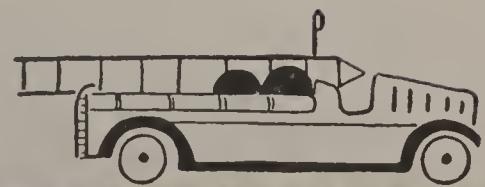
"Who is this boy?" asked the Mayor.
"Where did he come from?"

"Jimmy found him," said Daddy. "He didn't have any home. But now he is going to stay with us and take care of Jimmy when I'm at work, aren't you Tom?"

"Yes," said Tom, with beaming face. And that is how "Just Tom" became Tommy Anson.







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